

The book cover features a dense, colorful mosaic pattern of small, irregular squares in shades of orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. A teal-colored rectangular label with a decorative black border is centered on the cover. Inside the label, the title and author's name are printed in a black serif font.

The
Poor King's
Daughter
ALINE KILMER

dc

PS 3521 .I37 P6 1925

Kilmer, Aline Murray, Mrs. 1888-

The poor king's daughter, and other
poems



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

THE POOR KING'S
DAUGHTER

By ALINE KILMER

Essays

HUNTING A HAIR SHIRT
and other Spiritual Adventures

Poems

THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER
VIGILS
CANDLES THAT BURN

THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER

and other Poems

BY ALINE KILMER



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

3521
137
PG
1925

COPYRIGHT, 1925,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY



THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER AND OTHER POEMS

— A —

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To
the sweet memory of
FLORENCE FINDLEY ARROTT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For permission to reprint some of these poems I thank: *Good Housekeeping*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Hearst's International*, *Life*, *The Lyric*, *The Outlook*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *The Smart Set*, *Snappy Stories*, and the *New York Sun*.

CONTENTS

WITH DEEPER MENACE, 13

WARNING, 14

FAVETE LINGUIS, 15

PRELUDE, 16

NOVELETTE,

I DIAGONALS, 19

II IGNIS FATUUS, 20

III REFUGE, 21

IV RELEASE, 22

V ESCAPE, 23

SONG, 25

PTOLEMAIC, 26

A GUEST SPEAKS, 27

WHY? 28

TO APHRODITE : WITH A MIRROR, 30

DISPERSAL, 31

HAMADRYAD, 32

—THUS TO REVISIT, 33

THE JEST, 35

Contents

FALCON,	36
COMPLAINT,	37
YOU ASK ME NOT TO DIE,	38
THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER,	40
AGAINST THE WALL,	41
TOURNAMENT,	43
FOR THE BIRTHDAY OF A MIDDLE-AGED CHILD,	44
SANCTUARY,	45

THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER

THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER

WITH DEEPER MENACE

WHEN I was in Rome I tried so hard
To do as the Romans do;
A bit of a dance and a bit of a song
With laughter sifting through,

A careless kiss serenely given
And a heart held fancy-free—
It was all very well for the Roman-born,
But it was not good for me.

For I couldn't dance and I never could sing
And my laughter wouldn't ring true,
And whenever I gave my lips away
My foolish heart went, too.

So now I'll sit by the Roman Road
And watch the world go by.
When I see a lass that looks like me:
"Don't go to Rome!" I'll cry.

The Poor King's Daughter

WARNING

O don't go out from your witch's house
Through the whippoorwill-haunted night!
How do you know you'll ever come back?
For the vine swings clutching across your feet,
The hands of the hedge reach out and out,
The arms of the trees sweep down and around,
And nobody'll know the way you went
When you never come home any more.

And don't come back to your witch's house
After the dark is down.
The shadows leap from your candle's flare
To swallow the corners up.
The curtain sways where no one passed,
The cat stands staring into the dark,
And God knows what may be sitting there
In the chair with its back to the door.

The Poor King's Daughter

FAVETE LINGUIS

SPEAK not the word that turns the flower to ashes,
Praise not the beauty passing as you gaze.
Let your eyes drink of loveliness in silence :
It will but wither even as you praise.

See there the plum tree heavy with its blossom
Swings like the full moon, glimmering and round :
You lift your lute to celebrate its beauty
And all its petals flutter to the ground.

The Poor King's Daughter

PRELUDE

So many sing of splendid loves,
Of Guinevere and Lancelot,
Of Aucassin and Nicolette
They love to sing. But I do not.

I sing of little loves that glow
Like tapers shining through the rain,
Of little loves that break themselves
Like moths against the window-pane.

NOVELETTE

The Poor King's Daughter

I

DIAGONALS

Now this is the strangest thing since the world
began:

You tell me that you are a bad and a violent man;
But I see only

A child, little and lonely,
Crying with fright in a desolate place apart.

While I am known as chaste and reasonably good:
But you are blind to my virtuous womanhood;

Somehow you see,
Dragged out of the depths of me,
The wanton that every woman hides in her heart.

The Poor King's Daughter

II

IGNIS FATUUS

"Your fires are false, they tell me. So?
I knew it long and long ago.

"But I choose false ones for my play,
They are the safer any day;

"And if I burn my hands a bit
Why, who will ever know of it?"

All this I said when I was proud,
Under my breath, almost aloud.

Then I plunged boldly in and played,
By my own fires I am betrayed.

The Poor King's Daughter

III

REFUGE

I am glad I have come.
Let me stay;
I would not go home.
Let me rest in your kindness,
Your blessed blindness,
For a night and a day.
Your sweet, incurious eyes
Would widen in sharp surprise
If you knew how, under my breath,
I pray: "Let me sleep to death!
O God, let me never go home!"
But I speak through the fragrant gloom
Of your hushed and decorous room:
"Yes, I am glad I have come."

The Poor King's Daughter

IV

RELEASE

All that I had of wings,
And they were not large nor bright,
I broke against the harshness of your grieving
Night after night.

All that I had of song—
It was low and weak, I fear—
Was sung to ease the ache of your own sorrow;
But you would not hear.

All that I had of tears—
And my tears were warm and blessed—
Were shed to make your agony less lonely,
Upon your breast.

All that I asked to share
Was the pain that you would not show.
Now I have given you all that I had to give you,
Will you let me go?

The Poor King's Daughter

V

ESCAPE

Indifference may snare me, but only devotion can
hold me:

Where is the net you spread in hope that its meshes
might fold me?

Like a shadow I slipped through a web too slight
to bind me;

Now free and wise I cast the last frail threads on
the wind behind me.

The Poor King's Daughter

SONG

LOVE goes
As the wind blows,
And no man knows
 The place thereof.
But Pity stays
Through weary days
 Keeping the house of Love.

Though you come late
To the swinging gate,
The path is straight
 And the door is wide,
And Pity's eyes
Are so sadly wise
 You will think it is Love inside.

The Poor King's Daughter

PTOLEMAIC

WHEN Ptolemy sat watching from his roof
The great stars moving through the purple night
He knew that they went swinging round the earth:
And I believe that Ptolemy was right.

I know the moon is but a silver disc
Blown across heaven. You see it blowing plainly.
I know the world has towering walls of brass
Round which the seas of all the earth beat vainly.

The heaven I know is a more decent cover
Than your infinitude of yawning space.
What have you gained by making things all over
Into a most intolerable place?

The Poor King's Daughter

A GUEST SPEAKS

Now April rain has filled the rivers
And April sun has warmed the hills,
I would be back in my own garden
Watching my windy daffodils.

This is a fair and pleasant country
With a gracious girdle of hills about.
If I leave at once can I reach my garden
Before the iris buds come out?

Long, too long I have stayed among you
Praising the glories you show to me.
Do you not know I must be going
To greet my blossoming cherry tree?

The Poor King's Daughter

WHY?

THEY have scribbled on the walls and on the table-linen,

They have planted onions in my painted flower-box,

They have plucked the peony-buds and played with them for marbles,

And shorn their elfin locks.

They have striped themselves with paint until they looked like Ancient Britons,

They have played with poison-ivy till their eyes were swollen shut,

They have fallen down the cellar stairs and out of sleeping-porches,

And head-first in the water-butt.

The Poor King's Daughter

They have set their bare feet firmly on bees and
broken bottles,

They have stabbed themselves severely with
shears and carving-knives,

They have stood in front of motor-cars and dared
the things to kill them,

And with the greatest difficulty I have saved their
lives.

The Poor King's Daughter

TO APHRODITE: WITH A MIRROR

HERE, Cyprian, is my jewelled looking-glass,
My final gift to bind my final vow :
I cannot see myself as I once was ;
I would not see myself as I am now.

The Poor King's Daughter

DISPERSAL

WHAT will become of me now I am dead?
For my heart divided and went two ways,
Devil-driven, angel-led,
Bewitched, bewildered all my days.

Angel from fiend I cannot tell,
Twin shapes, alert, intent to fly;
One goes to Heaven, one to Hell,
And I—I know not which is I.

The Poor King's Daughter

HAMADRYAD

It was out of a tree I came;
I am hardly human.
Ah, why should you try to reclaim
A forest woman?

There is no peace to be found
In loving me:
My heart is as closely bound
As the heart of a tree.

Life holds me dumb with surprise,
Shaken with laughter;
Waiting with wondering eyes
What follows after.

What will the end of it be
If you pursue?
I shall go back to my tree
Whatever you do.

The Poor King's Daughter

—THUS TO REVISIT

THAT arrogant fool, the moon, is loose on the world
again,

But what do I care for her touch or her vacuous
face?

I saw her last night, the wanton, her head on the
hill's dark shoulder,

But I only smiled and shrugged and came back
alone to my place.

Because she knows that the world is a maddening
welter of blossom,

That the air is warm and wet and heavy with
locust bloom,

Being a fool, she will think that I have repented my
hardness.

Soon she will come to look for me here in my
little room.

The Poor King's Daughter

I have turned my back on the east that I may not
see her,

Lifting herself assuredly, knowing I shall be there.
By the time she has walked across the sky to stare
through my western windows

Sleep will have sealed my eyes against her, my
tears will be dried in my hair.

The Poor King's Daughter

THE JEST

GRIMLY and grey
Beside me stands
Someone holding
A sword in his hands.

Will he let it fall
Sudden and sure,
Or make me suffer
Peine forte et dure?

But whatever the end
Of the grisly jest
I am the one
Will come off best.

The Poor King's Daughter

FALCON

AND now, if you would see me rise,
Ravel the silken web of words,
 Beaded with pearl and amethyst—
The hood that veils my fiery eyes;
Loosen the silver chain of words
 That binds me to your mighty wrist.

Nor sleek my feathers cannily
 With your ensorcelling sleepy words.
 Made out of mist and poppy-seed;
Shatter the cage of ivory
 You builded me of carven words,
 And you shall see me soar indeed!

Then I will fly to some far peak
 Beyond the reach of all your words—
 And starve because you do not speak.

The Poor King's Daughter

COMPLAINT

I COULD have lived content in a snail's shell.
What tore me forth and furnished me with wings,
And set me here with other tortured things
Beating a painful way to Heaven or Hell?
Why could I not be left to creep and die?
I watch my wings with vague reproachful eye—
I never wished to fly.

The Poor King's Daughter

YOU ASK ME NOT TO DIE

You need not fear ;
You need not dread that day I shall be dying :
I shall not leave you, dear.
Others more tender, with more hope than I,
Lift thrush-sweet voices, lyrically crying
That they are soon to die.
But I shall live to see each starry head
That I have loved go down to its low bed,
And I shall wander through a ruined land
Where there will be no dear, accustomed hand
To ease my sorrow.
Nay, Sweet, to-morrow
Your flower-like beauty may have failed and fled,
And I shall weep you dead ;
Then rise to face the grim and hooded years,
Each with his vase of tears,
That move majestically by ;

The Poor King's Daughter

Till the little I had of beauty will be but a withered
mask,

And the little I had of wit will be bitter and dry.

Dear, you do not know what it is that you ask.

How can you love me and bid me not to die?

The Poor King's Daughter

THE POOR KING'S DAUGHTER

HAD I been bred to spinning
I might have spun
From the cold break of day
To the night's beginning.
For my own slow weaving
I might have spun a thread
Fit for the robe of a king's daughter
Or a shroud to wind the dead.

But now my hands are idle.
Idly I go
With flamboys borne before me
To dance at birth or bridal.
And it takes twelve maidens
To robe me for my sleep,
And fifty gallant gentlemen
To guard my empty keep.

The Poor King's Daughter

AGAINST THE WALL

IF I live till my fighting days are done
I must fasten my armour on my eldest son.

I would give him better, but this is my best.
I can get along without it—I'll be glad to have a
rest.

And I'll sit mending armour with my back against
the wall,
Because I have a second son, if this one should fall.

So I'll make it very shiny and I'll whistle very loud,
And I'll clap him on the shoulder and I'll say, very
proud:

"This is the lance *I* used to bear!"

But I mustn't tell what happened when I
bore it.

"This is the helmet *I* used to wear!"

But I won't say what befell me when I wore it.

The Poor King's Daughter

For you couldn't tell a youngster, it wouldn't be
right,

That you wish you had died in your very first fight.

And I mustn't say that victory is never worth the
cost,

That defeat may be bitter, but it's better to have
lost.

And I mustn't say that glory is as barren as a stone.
I'd better not say anything, but leave the lad alone.

So he'll fight very bravely and probably he'll fall:
And I'll sit mending armour with my back against
the wall.

The Poor King's Daughter

TOURNAMENT

I HAVE fought with the stars in their courses and
dreamed I have won,
I have charged full tilt with my levelled lance
straight into the flaming sun,
And because of the darkness that swallowed me I
have dreamed that the fight was done.

The Poor King's Daughter

FOR THE BIRTHDAY OF A MIDDLE- AGED CHILD

I'm sorry you are wiser,
I'm sorry you are taller;
I liked you better foolish,
And I liked you better smaller.
I'm sorry you have learning
And I hope you won't display it;
But since this is your birthday
I suppose I mustn't say it.

I liked you with your hair cut
Like a mediæval page's,
And I hate to see your eyes change
From a seraph's to a sage's.
You are not half so beautiful
Since middle-age befell you;
But since this is your birthday
I suppose I mustn't tell you.

The Poor King's Daughter

SANCTUARY

GOD has builded a house with a low lintel,
And in it He has put all manner of things.
Follow the clue through the mazes that lead to
 His door,
Look in! look in! see what is there for our finding.
Peace is there like a pearl, and rest and the end of
 seeking;
Light is there and refreshment, but there shall be
 more.
There we shall find for our use wide beautiful wings,
Ecstasy, solitude, space. And for those who have
 been too lonely
The love of friends, the warmth of a homely fire.
O never grieve again for the piteous ending
Of loveliness that could not be made to last!
There all bright passing beauty is held forever,
Free from the sense of tears, to be loved without
 regret.
There we shall find at their source music and love
 and laughter,

The Poor King's Daughter

Color and subtle fragrance and soft incredible
textures :

Be sure we shall find what our weary hearts desire.
If we are tired of light there shall be velvet darkness
Falling across long fields, with stars, and a low
voice calling,
Calling at last the word we thought would never be
spoken.

But we, being hard and foolish and proud and
mortal,
Are slow to bend and enter that humble portal.



DATE DUE

--	--	--

THE KING'S LIBRARY



3000052041



C0-ABS-744

